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General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

Official Records

111th plenary meeting
Thursday, 18 April 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tejerina (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Agenda item 12 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/847)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Group of Experts on Public Administration and Finance on its twelfth meeting (A/50/525)

Letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council to the President of the General Assembly (A/50/926)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.69)

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): This morning the Assembly will continue its plenary meetings devoted to public administration and development.

I call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Abu Oaf, State Minister of Labour and Administrative Reform of Sudan.

Mr. Abu Oaf (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): For the first time, the General Assembly is meeting on a special basis to take up, for the first time, the question of public administration and development. We consider it our duty to commend this positive initiative, since it addresses fundamental questions relating to public administration and its relationship to sustainable development.

In this context, I wish to express, on behalf of my delegation, our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his detailed report on public administration and development, contained in document A/50/847. I also wish to thank and commend the Group of Experts on Public Administration and Finance for the report on its twelfth meeting. I join other speakers in expressing appreciation for the valuable input of the Department for Development Support and Management Services and of all other organs operating in the area of public administration and development, particularly the specialized organs within the United Nations system.

The Sudan is undergoing fundamental changes in economic philosophy and sound governance. This requires effective political will and the support of a technical administration that is capable of developing its mechanisms and operational procedures in response to changes at the national and international levels.

Constitutional changes, and the move towards constitutional legality, are among the most important changes at the national level. Perhaps the most salient features of the coming period will be transparency and accountability in public administration and governance. Sudan's most important reforms in this area will include

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those pertaining to the philosophy of Government, which will be represented in grass-roots participation and self-reliance; and measures to allow market economics and mechanisms to function without harming the interests of vulnerable groups, to ensure social justice and to protect the social fabric of the community.

This new orientation, inspired by changes in the philosophy guiding government and economic management in the Sudan, requires changes in the functions of public administration and in the quality of the manpower needed to perform these functions in a businesslike manner and with the required flexibility. This will have an impact on policies and on the selection processes for public service, and will also require the establishment of rules and regulations governing promotion, training and retraining, in order to guide the process of change and development at all levels and in all spheres.

Job classification is an important aspect of the reform of public administration, and it comes into play in human resources planning and deployment and in determining policies for education, counselling and training. It should also help in job performance evaluation and in determining the skills and professional experience required. I wish to refer in this context to the international dimension of this issue — the impact of international developments, the globalization of the economy, large economic blocs, the freeing of international trade and the accumulation of foreign debt by States with limited incomes.

All these factors have implications for the performance of the national economy and government machinery in the areas of development and investment, and for the policies and plans required to adapt and develop the role of the national administration in accordance with the latest changes, maximize benefits and minimize adverse side effects.

In response to the issues I have outlined, Sudan has taken concrete steps in specific areas in line with available and potential national resources. I would like briefly to refer to the steps taken. In the context of policy development and the reform of administrative structures and the civil service, the Government has reorganized executive organs at the provincial and national levels in line with constitutional changes. Such changes, which affect government policy, are based on the concept of citizens' participation at the levels of local communities, national coalitions and local councils, so that people can administer their own affairs. Coordination organs have also been established, in addition to performance evaluation mechanisms at all levels of government. The Government has also shown a great interest in national training agencies to enhance the efficiency of workers.

In the area of improving the performance of the public sector, the Government has adopted a comprehensive national strategy, along with appropriate policies and programmes. We have established an ambitious programme to review the performance of various government organizations. The Government has also introduced a privatization policy and taken steps to downsize the civil service by eliminating surplus manpower in order to rationalize human resources and minimize civil service costs.

The Government has also taken steps to establish a national database to improve national administration in all ministries and government units. This will come under the umbrella of the manpower Ministry, which is in charge of human resources development, public service and employment.

The Government has implemented a reform programme for financial administration, and steps have been taken to reform tax administration and to encourage investment. The Government has also covered much ground in privatizing public sector enterprises and in conducting performance reviews to improve their effectiveness.

With regard to social development, the Government has established a Ministry for Social Planning to attend to the social development of special groups and various other sectors of society. Through its machinery and special funds, this Ministry addresses matters of need and poverty, while trying to cushion the effects of liberalized trade and free economic policies.

All these measures are aimed at bringing about justice and social balance. Participation in public and national administration has been achieved through the holding of elections for national councils, provincial legislative councils and the presidency.

The protection of the environment and the development of infrastructure are a priority for all government organs. A Ministry for the Environment was therefore established to coordinate efforts to protect the environment and to follow up the implementation of laws and legislation aimed at doing so. No infrastructure projects or development and investment plans will be implemented to the detriment of the ecosystem.

With regard to the Government's legal and organizational capabilities, all laws have been reviewed in order to ensure proper public administration, bring them into line with new government policies and ensure implementation of the principles of competence, accountability and the rule of law. Administrative oversight organs and recourse mechanisms have been established.

We support the recommendations of the Group of Experts as a whole, provided that the special conditions of every State are taken into account. We feel that some subjects of special concern to developing nations should be highlighted. First, assistance should be provided to Governments for the reorientation and retraining of officials in public administration, in order to improve their performance and translate policies into concrete action in the service of civilians. Second, support should be provided for building up the administrative structures and human resources required for the management of scarce and limited resources, to ensure their maximum utilization.

Third, support should be provided for building up crisis management capabilities. Fourth, support should be provided for building up organizational, planning and executive branches of local and national councils, in order to achieve decentralization and self-government. Fifth, assistance should be provided for building and strengthening database systems, so that data can be made more accessible to assist in the development and implementation of policies and measures. Sixth, government efforts to establish links between the educational system and the job market should be supported.

Seventh, support should be provided for the promotion of policies and programmes aimed at creating jobs. Eighth, support should be provided for building government institutions that work towards establishing peace in countries afflicted by conflicts, so that such States can promote peace, achieve stability and social security and channel their national resources for development purposes. Ninth, support should be provided for administrative and financial institutions at the regional level.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Babacar Nene Mbaye, Minister of Modernization of the State of Senegal.

Mr. Nene Mbaye (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Senegal would like, through me, to express its appreciation for this resumed session, which gives us the opportunity to reflect together, with the diversity and wealth of our own respective national experiences, on the key issue of public administration and development.

Senegal, like most countries of sub-Saharan Africa, is faced with the urgent need to devote major efforts to the promotion of its economy. In contrast with Europe, the absence of a middle class able to launch the process of economic and social development, the weakness of the industrial fabric, the well-known inadequacy of public facilities and national structure were, at the time of independence, major challenges to be met. Hence the need for State intervention, including through protectionism, to modify the nature of comparative advantages. The absence of a dynamic private sector and the circumstances of the world economy prompted African leaders to establish the need for State intervention in order to promote economic and social development.

This is why public administration, an instrument for the implementation of State policies, took over all the functions of sovereignty, as well as the economic and social activities of the 1960s and 1970s, as an integral part of the authority and tasks of the State. This approach led to a proliferation of structures and administrative activities and contributed to the birth of an overgrown and disjointed administration.

The establishment and subsequent rapid growth of a development administration, of a large quasi-public sector — a State monopoly of the marketing of agricultural goods and minerals — exemplified the expanding functions of public administration. This expansion of public power, along with the concomitant and continuous need for more foreign financing, significantly affected the economic balance.

In our countries, public administration has definitely not lived up to the hopes placed in it for the establishment of conditions to promote economic and social development. Over the years, it became cumbersome and weighed down the economy instead of driving it.

Under the effects of the crisis in public action, the complexity, weight, inefficiency, and inertia of the system affected its capacity to provide services. The breakdown of the 1980s led to the adoption of a programme of structural adjustment, of which the rationalization of public administration is a major component. Never before had the problem of public administration and development been so acute and constant.

This awareness has prompted us to give priority to state modernization, which means both openness and refusal to stagnate. As our Head of State, President Abdou Diouf, recalled,

> "administration cannot be set in its rules, isolated from the movement created by the changing conditions of economic life".

In fact, at the end of the millennium the world is experiencing changes of unprecedented scope, especially in the area of new technologies, which are upsetting traditional economic and cultural models and causing upheaval within nations and among peoples. Therefore, if society is to progress, it is urgent to open doors, to unfetter, to deregulate.

Accordingly, our Head of State decided to establish a Ministry for Modernization of the State. Aware of the importance of the stakes, this Ministry is trying to live up to the ambitions of our country in a demanding environment and is acting in many different ways.

The new administrative culture, of which communication is a significant aspect, presupposes a streamlined and transparent administration that tries to simplify for the users of public services, including economic players, all of the rules and procedures that are restrictive to a greater or lesser degree.

The administration of things, which is difficult, and that of people, which is even more so, should promote new approaches in the management of civil service personnel, without neglecting the management of careers, which, in a state of law, is the very essence of civil service.

Public management constitutes the middle road between management techniques for private enterprise and techniques to transform the rules and practices of public administration for the sake of integrity of public service principles. It is therefore possible to work in a different way to enhance the effectiveness of the administration through techniques applied in other fields, while adapting them to specific needs. Accordingly, our Government, on the instructions of our Head of State, launched the process by introducing a new degree of autonomy and new procedures — in short, by giving more freedom to initiatives.

In order to increase the effectiveness of administration and to improve its work, a strategic and organizational audit of the ministries has been set up. Its purpose is to redefine the missions of administration by refocusing them on the essential areas of generating strategies and policy, follow-up evaluation and programming, while streamlining certain implementation tasks. To make this more effective, the audit is focusing first on three ministries rather than the entire range.

Among the objectives of the audit are the necessary refocusing of the administration on its essential tasks; the organization and establishment of well-adapted structures and flexible procedures to carry out these tasks; and the establishment of adequate resources, both material and human, for the effective and efficient functioning of the administration.

The approaches used have profoundly changed the role of the administration by relieving it of certain implementation tasks and so that in the end only those relating to the identification of strategies and policies, to planning and to follow-up will be preserved.

The first actions already undertaken involve the establishment of new structures and a new framework of rules, the evaluation and selection of personnel by a private study group entrusted with recommending suitable personnel needed for the proper functioning of the organizational structures. This is carried out within a pre-defined framework. The audit has involved the job description, proposals for model structures, ministry personnel, the definition of training and action programmes, the formulation of a social plan to redeploy personnel without jobs but with abilities useful to other structures.

The expected results of this work are the perfect matching of personnel with the tasks and objectives of the ministerial structures, the establishment of communications systems and an ongoing training policy, the preparation of a decentralization charter, profitability for certain structures and the redefinition of tasks in order to reduce costs and increase efficiency in public action. With this audit, we intend to preserve the governing tasks of the State.

In addition to refocusing the State on its essential tasks, as suggested by the organizational and strategic audit, Senegal has just begun, with the help of the development management support office and with the support of a Canadian-Senegalese consortium, a real accounting audit of State personnel files.

This second audit fits in the global context of public administration reform to improve management tools, especially for control over salaries and personnel.

This real accounting audit of personnel files, accompanied by a legal and organizational analysis, has revealed a certain number of failings that can be addressed through a proposed organizational arrangement linked to a permanent system of administrative management. None the less, to safeguard the audit's achievements, temporary measures will be taken before June 1996 in order to have a single personnel file and an operational information system.

The need to stabilize the macroeconomic framework arising from the current crisis in public management, characterized by diminished public resources and the need to manage costs, to decrease expenditures and reduce the budget deficit, leads inescapably to changes in public systems of financial management.

Public sector reform and the implementation of a new organizational culture mean improvements in financial management, especially with regard to arrears of payments and rationalizing expenditures and budgetary procedures. Reducing public expenditure has been one of the main elements of the stabilization and structural adjustment policy. Although good results have been obtained, it is mainly investment and maintenance expenditures that have been dealt with, and substantial efforts are needed with regard to salaries and debt-servicing.

Control of public spending has been limited because of inadequate wage restraints, overspending, unforeseen expenditures and the use of credits intended for investment to meet operational costs. To remedy this, the Government has decided on two complementary steps. One is to allocate any surplus income to public expenditures other than wages and salaries, and the other is to simplify and rationalize budgetary procedures. The Government has therefore decided to fix the salaries bill at 40 per cent of total income. All surplus income will go to other expenditures, with the State ensuring that investment and expenditure on materials are given priority in the allocation of resources. This has been decided because of the State's awareness of the need to make public expenditure meet the needs of the growth strategy.

The forthcoming holding by the Government of a seminar on the budget will make it possible to reach consensus on criteria to identify expenditures that should be provided for on an annual basis in the finance Bill.

Improvement of public financial management must be closely linked to strengthening human resources to establish a climate of competence and professionalism in administration, in both the public and private sectors. In this respect, a certain number of measures have been initiated. They include reform of the national schools, professional training, retraining and motivation. National training schools have so far been the high road to civil service careers. The schools formerly met the exclusive demands of the State, but in today's context of structural adjustment policies and the quest to balance public finances they produce more graduates than the civil service can absorb. Thus the schools have been taking in fewer and fewer students, which has resulted in the cost of training going up without the quality of education improving.

In addition, the right to training, which to some extent comes before the right to employment, has been sacrificed. In this context, and to avoid a distortion of the education system in relation to measures being applied to various levels of the national socio-economic and financial system, in-depth consideration has been given to restructuring our national training schools.

After this in-depth study, carried on in various workshops and committees, a number of guidelines have been adopted. They include the elimination of automatic direct access to the civil service for all of those leaving training institutions; the opening up of training institutions to the private sector, as well as to foreign students, especially those from the subregion, provided they pay for their training; revision of the institutions' current rules to permit them to generate their own resources and to allow for self-management; and revitalizing the work of improving the various institutions, work in which the potential users will be able to participate.

The growing complexity of society, exacerbated by rapid technological change, and above all the accelerated globalization of the economy make ongoing training imperative; hence the need, in addition to quality training, for recycling, improvement, renewal and expansion of abilities for organizations and the countries that, following our example, seek excellence. In this context, the State must meet the ongoing training needs of its employees through its own means, complemented by international bilateral and multilateral cooperation. This requires returning the human resources function to ministerial departments so that training needs and the related training plans can be properly determined.

Vocational training is another important part of strengthening human resources. In this regard, the restoration of vocational training centres established immediately after independence, in response to the urgent need for various professionals, is an urgent necessity.

An analysis of voluntary separation programmes — about 5,000 out of 60,000 civil servants have left — has made apparent, among other things, financial constraints linked to lack of support from development partners and to the personnel structure. As a result, our negotiated separation programmes have been radically altered, with the goal of progressively retraining administration employees and improving their expertise. Selectivity is the big difference from the voluntary separation programmes, because the new programme will concern only those employees the State chooses to separate. It is imperative to revitalize the administration by replacing those unable to adapt to economic and social change with specialists available in the market place.

The reform of the vocational training schools by the elimination of automatic recruitment enables the administration to recruit selectively those in whom it is interested. Aside from retraining employees, a more efficient management of human resources will be sought by improving the system of evaluation. The current system, based on grading, is less an instrument of human resources management than a tool to protect personnel against arbitrariness, and its basis has become increasingly outdated.

This system of evaluation does not meet the needs of a management that is taking into account merit, results and motivation. It is therefore necessary to move from the grading system to a participatory evaluation system, which seeks to judge the intrinsic merits of the employee, to assess his or her work objectively and to select the best performers and guide their future careers.

That is why it is important to establish new assessment procedures, with varying scales, adapted to the functions and category of personnel. This imminent change, in the process of being finalized, should guarantee the emergence of a system of performance motivation based on merit and innovation.

The regions, which have been turned into local bodies of a type new to Senegal, should, because of their limited number — 10 — and the breadth of the powers the States will transfer to them, strengthen local government and promote participatory democracy. Regionalization will immediately change the administrative landscape profoundly if significant progress is made in the decentralization of powers.

Decentralization, with powerful regions and autonomous local communities, should be accompanied by an end to concentration of power, with representatives of the State being the natural, credible spokesmen of the citizens and local representatives. The region is the ideal framework for an administration characterized by an economic and social dynamic, frank and constructive dialogue between elected representatives and citizens, and coordination and a willingness to act at the operational level of local communities.

The region also offers the opportunity to strengthen the policy of rationalization of expenditures and the simplification of administrative procedures.

Public administration is a complex system whose elements interact and influence each other and the environment, especially the economic environment.

Our Head of State, President Abdou Diouf, in his message to the nation on 3 April 1990, expressed his concern and recommended changing administration so that it may fulfil

> "its tasks of general interest without placing useless obstacles in the way of managers or entrepreneurs".

This is why a streamlining of administrative procedures, an important part of the modernization strategy, has been undertaken, with the major objective of ensuring a favourable environment for private initiative and high quality services for users — business undertakings and citizens.

Regulation in decentralized management must make it possible to establish a flexible system, with staff mobility; it must also be able to anticipate change and the needs of users, to understand the threats and to grasp the opportunities.

Flexibility, speed and innovation, but also productivity, must today be the attributes of administration for development. This is why, in addition to streamlining formalities and administrative procedures, liberalizing some sectors, introducing autonomy and retraining workers, we need to take other action, including providing information systems, modernizing the education system and ensuring ongoing training. These

tasks have been begun. This means that society is progressively being restructured around the State, which is the driving force and at the same time plays a monitoring role.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the challenges of development and the constraints of globalization of the economy mean that we need to move quickly towards self-regulation in a modernized Senegalese society which has reached a new level of maturity and which has new responsibilities brought by the winds of change.

In a democratic country, public administration which is effective and enlightened because it is refocused on its essential tasks can contribute powerfully to a country's economic development not only by coordinating the efforts of public and private enterprise, but also by attracting worthwhile investment.

This important resumed session is certainly timely, and will give new impetus to the efforts being made in all Member States to modernize structures and create administrations favourable to development. Senegal hopes that a useful follow-up and evaluation mechanism will be adopted as a result of this session.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the Permanent Representative of India.

Mr. Shah (India): It gives me great pleasure to participate on behalf of India in this resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly convened to discuss the very important issue of public administration and development. My delegation would like to pay tribute to the delegation of Morocco for the efforts Morocco has put into the adoption of resolution 49/136 and the convening of these special meetings.

Economic growth and sustainable development are issues of importance for all countries. While the problems of managing sustained economic growth and development are different for developing countries, they are no less important in the developed countries, many of which have gone through recession and reduction in gross domestic product growth in recent years. All countries, therefore, face the complex task, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, of trying to redefine the role of government in the pursuit of economic growth and sustainable development. All countries face the challenges arising from that pursuit in regard to the introduction of efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness, as well as the need to strengthen financial management capacities.

My delegation welcomes the holding of these special meetings, primarily because the General Assembly, in its resolution 49/136, acknowledged the importance of exchanging views and experiences of Member States in order to promote better understanding of the role of public administration and development and to enhance international cooperation in this field. In fact, this is the first time that the experiences gained by Member nations in strengthening public administration in their own countries have been exchanged at this forum. We have gained considerable insight from the national experiences of Member States as described in their statements. It is significant that in every case the national experience has been tailored to meet the very special needs of the country concerned.

The membership of the United Nations varies from multi-ethnic, multi-religious countries of large size and population to culturally homogeneous small countries. In most cases, the motivation for adopting new measures or ideas in the field of public administration was the need and demand for such changes from within those countries. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize what the Secretary General's report points out: that the challenges which Governments worldwide face in establishing a framework of public administration and a financial system for sustainable economic development are not just domestic influences, but are also unpredictable external factors. It would, therefore, greatly assist national efforts if simultaneous measures were also taken to make the external environment more stable and predictable. Indeed, the need for fundamental review in the role of public administration and development has become urgent because countries have to meet the complex developmental challenges of dealing with the impact of increasing globalization and the role of non-governmental organizations and the private sector, while focusing on the primary objectives of eliminating poverty and promoting social justice and economic growth.

The United Nations and its agencies have so far focused their efforts on providing technical and other assistance to Member nations based upon specific requests from them in assisting these countries to meet the challenges. The Secretary-General's report states that the core theme of the efforts of the United Nations in public administration have been, and should continue to be, assisting Member States in two broad areas: first, by

generating and disseminating information on experiences; and, secondly, by customizing, on request, appropriate improvement programmes and practices in individual countries.

My delegation supports the Secretary-General's observation that United Nations assistance should continue with these two core themes, and should be based solely on the request of the individual countries. There have been some suggestions that the United Nations should move into the area of standard-setting or of laying down targets to measure efficiency in public administration in Member countries. The diversity among Member States of the United Nations, the different stages of their development, the special circumstances that exist in each country or region, and different levels of their infrastructure, both physical and human, are only some of the reasons why it would be unwise for the United Nations to pursue suggestions on standard-setting. The information on national experiences that we have gathered during these last three days demonstrates that, while there are effectively certain basic principles which most countries have followed in their national efforts, these guidelines or beneficial national approaches can be adopted by other countries only if they feel that adoption of such approaches would benefit them, or if these national experiences could be tailored to their requirements.

What is equally important is for the international community to consider laying down guidelines or principles for other players — namely, the civil society and the private sector — to follow if public administration reforms are to succeed in various countries.

We all know, for example, that corruption in public administration is not unrelated to the promotion of corruption by the private sector. The process of administration, whether in developed or in developing countries, has often been vitiated by the existence of vested interests. Our deliberations in this special session should not focus solely on the improvements of public administration and financial structures of governments, but should also address the role of the private sector, the manipulation of market forces and speculation in financial markets, which have a direct link to the fabric and structure of public administration in all countries. While we appreciate the effort that has gone into the Secretary-General's report, we believe that greater comprehensiveness covering these aspects would have provided a firmer basis for our deliberations.

I will now briefly survey our experience in India since achieving independence in 1947. Although we started with advantages in the area of available infrastructure, this was more than offset by the daunting task of establishing and strengthening already existing structures for a multiracial, multi-religious, multilingual, democratic, newly independent developing country. We proceeded to achieve this with a special focus on India's needs, and our Constitution set forth the institutional bases for resilient administrative processes, especially in the crucial areas of legal, judicial, parliamentary and democratic structures. The result over the years is a solid administrative and bureaucratic framework, the strength of which is comparable to the best available experience anywhere. Our administrative structure in the governmental sector has, as an important feature, embodied the policy of affirmative action for the less privileged sections of our society. This institutional strength has given our country the unique privilege of being able to offer assistance and training under several national priority programmes of technical assistance to other developing countries in the area of public administration.

The constitutional protection that has accompanied the creation and protection of these institutions has ensured their strengthening over the years. Such institutional strength has been supplemented by periodic reviews and monitoring for improvements and strengthening. Our country's experience and maturity in dealing with maintenance of law and order over the years, in our vast and diverse country, as well as preserving the political stability and the open and transparent democratic processes of the country, is standing testimony to my Government's commitment to public administration and procedures and to the strength of our institutions. These efforts have been accompanied by a particularly vocal free press in the second most populated country in the world, which has made these accomplishments significantly more creditable.

India's emphasis on training of manpower and human resources, assisted by our institutional strength, has made it possible for India to put in place already several mechanisms for follow-up to major international and United Nations conferences, like the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the World Conference on Women, the United Nations Conference on Population and Development, and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. There is constant monitoring of possible improvement in the quality of the civil service through

the continuing efforts of our Union Public Service Commission authorities, one of our oldest, established and most respected institutions. It is also a great achievement for us that civil service training institutes offer and receive several candidates for training from other countries.

Our efforts in achieving institutional and human resources standards have been accompanied by an equal commitment to distributive justice, especially in the wake of our market reforms under way. Our recent efforts at market reform, the enthusiasm with which we have been able to embrace the revolution in information technology — especially in the software area — and our considerable advances in indigenous scientific capabilities, have to a large extent been possible only because of the existence of the structures in public administration that can help institutionalize assimilation and progress.

In a few days, India will hold its tenth general elections for the Federal Parliament and a number of State Assemblies. With an electorate estimated at over 550 million people, it will be the largest free election in the history of the world. The human resources required to manage this huge exercise will come entirely from within India, and will be drawn from the public administration system, and the law and order machinery of India.

Before I end, I would like to mention that in November 1995 the Commonwealth Heads of Governments endorsed the Commonwealth initiative for public service reform to provide a focus for collaboration between Commonwealth countries on the basis of their national experience, and in which we, of course, participate.

I wish to conclude by once again expressing our deep appreciation to the Secretary General and to the delegation of Morocco for their initial efforts on an issue where a great deal of work is yet to be done.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua.

Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Nicaraguan delegation welcomes the discussions at this resumed session of the General Assembly on public administration and development. Knowledge of the views and experiences of other countries will help us to better understand the role of public administration in development, will help encourage international cooperation and will help us to avoid errors that have already been encountered by other Administrations. It will also help to strengthen the United Nations system with regard to creating a capacity in the area of public administration and finance.

I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/50/847), which will be very useful to the Governments of Member States. We support his comments and his focus on the role the United Nations can play in this area.

At the end of the last decade Nicaragua was in a situation of civil war, aggravated by the cold war confrontation. The Esquipulas Agreements reached by the Presidents of Central America were very important in bringing the conflict to an end and in the holding of elections in February 1990, with international monitoring including a United Nations presence; on 25 April 1990, for the first time in the history of Nicaragua, this led to the peaceful transfer of power to an opposition party.

When the present Government of Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro took over, Nicaragua was in a state of war. It had to carry out the demobilization of more than 20,000 men who had taken up arms. It also had to reduce an army of almost 90,000 soldiers. These were key tasks in ending a civil war which had gone on for almost 10 years. Although these tasks were complex, they were just the beginning of a peace process and efforts to modernize the State, in order to adapt it to new regional circumstances and the globalization of international relations.

We had to ease the return to a productive civilian life of those who had taken up arms and given them opportunities for development, so as to avoid a return to the socio-economic conditions which had led to war, which could destroy the peace. The new Government had to go through a difficult transitional period unprecedented in the history of our country. We had to shift from war to peace; from authoritarianism to democracy, with full participation; from a centralized economy to a free market system, with social justice; from international isolation to political, economic and social reintegration. All of this required effective, efficient public administration in order to try to achieve sustainable development.

The current Government inherited major macroeconomic imbalances. Hyperinflation rose to 33,000 per cent in 1988 and exports were just one third of imports. Production levels had fallen to those of the 1960s. We therefore had to institute a thorough programme of stabilization, adjustment and incentives to

end these distortions. Prices were completely deregulated in this State modernization process. We eliminated the State monopoly on foreign trade and the financial system; so far we have privatized more than 90 per cent of State enterprises, and we are in the process of privatizing enterprises which were for long — or always — State monopolies, including telecommunications and electric power.

Under an effective banking regulator, various private banks with national and foreign capital have been established. This has allowed us to bring back capital, helping job creation and Nicaragua's agricultural, trade and industrial development.

Our current Government had to reduce substantially the size of the State bureaucracy, which had reached enormous proportions and led to great imbalances. The shrinking of the State was accompanied by the decentralization of the Government and a shift of responsibilities to the regional, municipal and community levels and to the private sector in areas in which it could be more efficient. This was done with the aim of encouraging development policies and satisfying the basic needs of the population.

The initiatives to modernize the Nicaraguan State led to the elimination of various institutions that responded to other political precepts or exercised functions that, with the proper motivation, the private sector could perform more efficiently. Other entities were changed in order to respond more efficiently and effectively to the problems of the population. One example of this is the Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security. It was separated from the welfare department, which was allocated to another institution, enabling it to provide better services at lower cost. Private clinics and hospitals were contracted to provide health services for people with insurance, and the Institute's existing infrastructure was improved, also leading to better service.

The process of political harmonization and reconciliation initiated by the Government encouraged the individual and collective participation of civil society in all activities, promoting a climate of trust that to date has facilitated the functioning of a growing free market economy with social justice. The plan for occupational redeployment, using such incentives as offering one month's pay for every year worked and, for those who accept, assistance in establishing small businesses or in acquiring shares in established businesses, has been a success.

The current Government of Nicaragua has worked intensively to solve the problem of property. Thousands of properties that were State owned when the current Government took office have been returned to their original owners. To facilitate the resolution of this problem, constitutional provisions have been strengthened, and a conference to consider important options was held in July 1995, sponsored by the Carter Center and the United Nations Development Programme. At the same time, the National Assembly adopted a law on property that, within the time-frame of its implementation, will put an end to this problem once and for all.

Today we can assert that the country is enjoying the greatest degree of political freedom in its history. Great progress has been made in the institutionalization of democracy, and resources that were once devoted to war are now devoted to education, health and strengthening the state of law and institutionality.

In the framework of the transition to and consolidation of democracy, Nicaragua has undertaken important experiments that, being in their early stages, require international support. They are our point of departure towards a determined process aimed at achieving sustainable development in the context of an effective and efficient public administration.

These initiatives include, *inter alia*, such activities as the strengthening of local governments; economic improvement at the local level, including aspects of productive employment; creating small businesses and capitalization; organizing marketing; occupational training; and integrating women into economic and development activities. They also include improving public health, with emphasis on prevention and service for the most vulnerable groups — especially children — including planning, organizing and financing local health services; improving basic public education, with emphasis on reducing illiteracy and on vocational training, with community participation, improved educational infrastructure, the promotion of culture and so on; and the improvement of living conditions, physical planning and local infrastructure, including participatory analysis of the environmental situation, the conservation of natural resources, improved availability of drinking water and environmental sanitation services. Untiring efforts have also been made in the promotion of human rights, particularly in respect of information, democratic participation and the administrative and legal functions of democratic institutions guaranteeing the civil and political

rights of the population, including documentation, the local administration of justice and civic education.

Last June, in the framework of this process, some amendments of the 1987 political Constitution went into effect in Nicaragua, thus culminating a long period of national debate between the executive and legislative organs, the political parties and civil society. The reformed Constitution ensured, at the highest legal and political levels, the continuity of the democratic process, freedom, and the protection of all the rights and interests of citizens. This reform is the product of our society's political pluralism and is the common denominator of differing ideologies, even antagonistic ones.

The reform altered 65 of the Constitution's 202 articles, with respect to individual rights; the rights and responsibilities of and guarantees for the Nicaraguan people; political and social rights; the rights of the Nicaraguan family; defence and the national economy; agrarian reform and public finances; education and culture; the organization of the State; municipal affairs; and the Atlantic Coast communities. It also established the supremacy of constitutional rule.

The major objective of the reform was, *inter alia*, the political modernization of Nicaragua, giving the country institutions that resolve political conflicts without violence through the introduction of secure and reliable processes for resolving differences. The constitutional reform guarantees minorities the right of opposition on the basis of the principle that democracy is measured by its respect for the majority in elections and afterwards by its respect for minorities.

In matters of defence, the role of the armed forces has been redefined. They have been declared entirely subordinate to the political Constitution as an apolitical, non-partisan, non-deliberative body obedient to civil authority; mandatory military service has also been abolished. The special exemption has been eliminated, and it has been clearly established that in no case may a civilian be judged by military courts. Similarly, soldiers will be judged by civil courts when their crimes are not of a military nature.

In the redefinition of State functions, free education and public health have been guaranteed. The reform also includes the process of legislative drafting, which was not provided for in the 1987 Constitution. The State Attorney's Office for Human Rights has been created as an independent entity to monitor respect for human rights in our society.

The Electoral Power has been confirmed as a State authority and has been assigned exclusive oversight of elections, plebiscites and referendums. No appeal of its decisions in electoral matters is admitted.

The judiciary has been allocated a fixed percentage of the Republic's budget. The membership of the Supreme Court of Justice has been set at 12 and its powers broadened. These reforms are helping to establish better conditions for harmony between Nicaraguans in various aspects of coexistence.

In respect of this resumed session, we agree with those who have said that the United Nations should consider doing some follow-up work on the recommendations on public administration and development within the context of existing structures, but that it should not establish new, costly mechanisms to do so.

We believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in strengthening public administration and good governance, mainly in order to guarantee the preservation of public functions and services in countries in transition, to develop strategies and initiatives for rebuilding public administration in those countries that, like ours, are only just beginning to recover from conflict and have just set out on the path of reconstruction, and to support technical cooperation programmes in the neediest countries when requested to do so.

We feel that United Nations activities in public administration and finance should be developed, taking into account the priority areas identified by the Group of Experts on Public Administration and Finance at its twelfth meeting. With respect to this and to the general follow-up of the subject, we believe that the United Nations Development Programme, which has been doing work of this kind, must continue to play a primary role in this field, helping to coordinate activities in the field at the inter-agency level and promoting complementary activities at the bilateral level, particularly in State reform in the economic and social fields and in the justice sector.

We are convinced that an effective and efficient public administration is the foundation of a strong civil and democratic society. The achievement of this objective requires important changes that all countries must foster. In this effort, United Nations support is essential for

strengthening the capacities of our institutions in the right areas.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Assouma Yacoubou, Minister for the Civil Service, Labour and Administrative Reform of Benin.

Mr. Yacoubou (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): It is an honour and pleasure for me to speak on behalf of my country, the Republic of Benin, before this Assembly on such an important topic as public administration and development. I wish to take this opportunity to pay a sincere tribute to the sisterly delegation of Morocco, which played such an important role in the convening of this session.

In 1990, Benin embarked on a process of democratization with the convening of a National Conference of Active Forces of the Nation. This process is gradually taking root through the holding of free and transparent elections with a very high rate of participation, and the establishment of checks-and-balances organs, such as the Constitutional Court, the Audio-Visual and Communications Authority and the Economic and Social Council. The pursuit of this process calls for a revolution in thinking and a revolutionizing of the entire administration to meet new demands.

It is our profound conviction today that no administrative reform can succeed without a thorough reform of the State, which for us means the establishment of good governance. The reform of the State is the precursor of a real administration of development. This is what underlies and strengthens the responsibility of leaders, establishes the State of law and assures citizens their full enjoyment of fundamental individual and collective freedoms and thus a better organization of civil society and the development of private initiative.

In his book entitled *A Governance Approach to Civil Service Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Mamadou Dia of the World Bank wrote:

> "In many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the ineffectiveness of the civil service threatens almost all development efforts ... This crisis is doubly serious at a time when structural adjustment programs are requiring key central civil service institutions to plan and manage fundamental transformations in the economy." (*World Bank technical paper number 225, Africa Technical Department series, pp. 5-6*)

On page 6 he added that at the end of 1991 there were 57 operations supported by the World Bank in Africa, with structural adjustment loans, technical assistance loans and projects linked to the social dimension of development. Further on, the author concluded that:

> "The results are, at best, mixed". (*ibid. p. 10*)

The subtopic of strengthening the capacity for policy development, restructuring the administrative system and civil service reform — the subject of our comments — emerges from the fact that, in many developing countries, structural adjustment programmes have been speedily assimilated into administrative reform programmes. The structural adjustment programmes certainly made it possible to re-establish a certain macroeconomic balance, but no sign of change or improvement in the effectiveness of public administration has been seen in the countries subjected to the downsizing and rebalancing advocated by the Bretton Woods institutions.

The problems that undermine most African public administrations have remained very acute. Not only have they remained command administrations inherited from the model passed down by the former colonizer, but the moral and ethical values that once characterized them have also degenerated. They have become sluggish, too sluggish to respond to the needs of the private sector, where time is money, and too corrupt to evolve.

It is therefore urgent to move from that type of administration to a real development administration through reform of the civil service based on the complete restructuring of the system of administration inspired by a strengthening of the capacity to develop reform policies.

Why must the capacity to develop reform policy be strengthened? How and by whom should it be undertaken? The first question of this subtopic of our concern has already found its solution in the preceding considerations. We simply wish to recall here that we must move from a command administration, an inflexible, patrimonial administration, to a development administration.

As regards the answers to the questions "By whom?" and "How?", we beg the indulgence of this Assembly to cite Benin's experience.

The public sector has generally been the subject of many statements and criticisms. None the less, it remains relatively misunderstood from an objective and technical standpoint. Hence, analyses and diagnoses run the risk of being based on a fragile or erroneous foundation. In order to avoid this risk, Benin first set out to deepen knowledge of its public sector. Thus, seven preparatory studies have been undertaken in fields as diverse and important as the following: first, remuneration in the civil service; second; summary of audits conducted in certain Ministries; third, rapid diagnostic assessments of Ministries that have not been audited; fourth, administrative practices and the State of law; fifth, analysis of the general status of the civil service; sixth, inquiry into the image of the public sector; and, seventh, ethics, professional conduct and motivation of State employees.

These studies cover a broad field and have allowed us to achieve the objective of improving our knowledge base on the mechanisms of Benin's public administration. None the less, certain matters, such as decentralization and devolution, were not covered by the studies because they are the purview of the General Office of Territorial Administration, set up in 1993.

The studies thus conducted provide a very important operational data base on the public sector in Benin. They have since been summarized and submitted to the General Office of the Public Service, which drew on them in making recommendations and proposals that have helped to design and implement the plan of reform and modernization of Benin's public administration, a general policy document on administrative reform. It involves eight programmes and implementation steps aimed at improving the productivity of the public institutions, making leaders accountable, and improving user services and civil society organization.

We feel that the approach taken and the participants in this endeavour — which, like any human endeavour, can certainly be improved — are of great importance and should be emphasized.

To accomplish this reform plan, Benin relied foremost on national competence. Thus, national consultants conducted the entire diagnosis of Benin's public sector. They did, however, benefit from the methodological assistance of an international consultant made available to the Civil Service Ministry to that end. The consultant's work involved the drafting, in cooperation with managers in the Ministry, of the terms of reference of the different studies. The consultant followed the work of the national consultants throughout the study and made observations wherever necessary.

Each of the studies clearly diagnosed the subsector under consideration and then made proposals to correct any failings and distortions noticed. The proposals and recommendations were studied, analysed, complemented and endorsed by the General Office, which rated the participation of representatives of civil society at 75 per cent.

This original approach by Benin to the reform of its civil service had three major advantages: first, the transfer of skills and the strengthening of national expertise; secondly, the relatively low cost of the operation, compared with what it would have cost had it been conducted completely by international consultants; thirdly, the integration of national cultural and moral values in the different proposals and recommendations, thus easing implementation of this reform policy by the citizens at large and by the users of public services in particular.

What suggestions can we make to strengthen the ability to draw up policies to reform the public service?

To strengthen the capacity to develop reform policies and increase the chances of success, the developing countries in general, and those of Africa in particular, need to reduce their excessive dependence on foreign expertise. The United Nations should increasingly reduce its tendency to spend large sums on international expertise, as the results are less and less appropriate to the development of the nations assisted. The scale of remuneration under the United Nations programme provides for international experts to be paid from $250 to $400 a day, whereas the range for national consultants is only $27 to $87 a day.

We remain convinced, however, that it is not yet possible to do without foreign expertise entirely in all fields. None the less, we make the following suggestions with regard to civil service reform.

First, the United Nations, through its specialized agencies, should define and implement a clear, precise policy for the transfer of skills and the strengthening of national expertise.

Secondly, exchanges of experience should be organized between the countries of the South and between the countries of the North and South.

Thirdly, international conferences and seminars should be organized on experience of civil service reform.

Fourthly, private sector management tools should be adapted for public administration and use.

Lastly, there should be a policy on training those at the managerial and decision-making levels to develop the ability to diagnose problems.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Babar (Pakistan): Permit me, first, to felicitate the delegation of Morocco for their endeavours in focusing the attention of Member States on the exceedingly important issue of public administration and development. I would also like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (A/50/847) on this issue.

The consideration by the General Assembly of the issue of public administration and development is most timely. Recent global changes have led to a questioning of the role of all institutions involved in development. There has been a particularly intense debate on the role of the public sector. Our deliberations this week will be invaluable in bringing together the various strands of this debate and, hopefully, in pointing to ways to optimize the role of public administration institutions in promoting development.

At the conceptual level there has been a remarkable convergence in recent years on the framework in which public administration institutions should function. The principles of transparency, accountability and greater participation by people in administrative processes that affect their lives are no longer viewed as idealistic slogans to which lip service must be paid. Rather, these have come to be accepted as fundamental prerequisites for promoting development.

Likewise, the contentious issue of the relationship of public and private sectors in promoting development has largely ended. There is broad agreement that the public sector should concentrate on creating conditions which will allow the private sector to promote economic growth in a socially responsible manner. This could involve activities such as formulating rational regulatory codes, implementing infrastructure projects, promoting economic enterprises in economically disadvantaged regions and training a skilled workforce.

While there have been breakthroughs at the conceptual level, difficulties persist in translating agreed principles into practice. Transparency, accountability and participation are principles that are not easy to operationalize. The dynamics of large bureaucracies, the varying levels of administrative expertise and the differences in local conditions make it impossible to devise generic prescriptions on how to put these principles into effect.

Similarly, while there is an understanding of the desirable relationship between the public and private sectors, there is difficulty in striking the right balance between the two. Again, local conditions are the determining factor. The optimal mix of public and private sector activities is predicated upon factors specific to each country. This leads to the inescapable conclusion that principles pertaining to the role of public administration in development need to be applied with due regard to local conditions.

While in each country public administrators are faced with tasks and challenges specific to that country, certain challenges appear to be common to administrators, depending on whether they belong to developed or developing countries.

In developed countries public administrators need to have a better understanding of the impact of the macroeconomic policies that they formulate on the world at large. The soundness of these policies, especially fiscal, monetary and trade policies, should not be evaluated solely on the basis of their immediate effect on national economies. Rather, the policies should be judged to be sound only if these do not hinder the prospects of developing economies. This is simply because in an increasingly integrated global economy growth in the advanced countries cannot be sustained over the long term if the growth of developing countries is not ensured as well.

In developing countries public administrators need to enhance their understanding of the emergent global economic and technological forces. Information based service enterprises are supplanting the manufacturing sector as the main engine of economic growth. If developing countries are to become truly developed they

have to adopt modes of production based on information and communications technology. Mere industrialization will not be enough. Also, new modes of production may hold answers to many development problems. For instance, the problems associated with uncontrolled urbanization may be mitigated by using modern communications technologies, which allow for the dispersal of work units outside urban areas, thus lessening the burden on already overcrowded cities. Educational opportunities can also be provided to a far greater number of people, while avoiding huge expenditures on putting up college and university buildings. The possibilities for circumventing the traditional development constraints are tremendous. What is required is the ability to understand and harness emerging technological forces while tackling these constraints.

In Pakistan particular attention is being given to two aspects of public administration in order to meet today's development challenges.

First, at the field level there is an emphasis on the participatory model of development. Successful initiatives by non-official actors in promoting grass-roots, community-based development are being intensively studied and replicated on a wider scale. The public administration machinery at the district level is being geared to undertake development efforts from a bottom-up, and not a top-down, perspective.

Secondly, at the policy level there is a systematic programme to make public administrators aware of the profound economic and technological changes sweeping the world, and of their implications for the country's development. There is an increasing stress on providing civil servants with continued education and training programmes. A network of federal and provincial academies and institutes offer courses that enable public administrators to factor in contemporary trends while formulating development policy.

The experience and expertise Pakistan has acquired in the area of public administration are being shared with other countries. Public administrators from a number of countries are participating in different management courses in Pakistan. A special programme has been established for Africa, which enables civil servants from that continent to obtain management training at the junior as well as at the mid-career levels. Needless to say, these programmes have been of immense benefit to our own administrators, as they have allowed them to share a wealth of different development experiences.

We are of the view that the United Nations has a significant role to play in enhancing the effectiveness of public administration institutions of all countries. The United Nations can be a facilitator for the exchange of national experiences and, equally important, it can be a provider of technical assistance for enhancing public administration capacities. We have noted with interest the institutional mechanisms proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/50/847) to achieve these ends.

The final organizational arrangements that are agreed upon should ensure two things. First, the existing duplication of efforts should be eliminated, and, secondly, the actors within the United Nations that have acquired expertise in this area at the operational level should be further strengthened.

If the United Nations institutional ability to enhance public administration capacity is strengthened, and we attain greater clarity on the conceptual issues involved in the area of public administration and development, then this session of the General Assembly will have achieved its objective.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the Permanent Representative of Zambia.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): The delegation of Zambia wholeheartedly welcomes this opportunity to exchange our national experiences, as well as to discuss in depth the important subject of public administration and development.

We are thankful for the Secretary-General's reports on the issues as well as his introduction and guidance to this resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

My delegation would also like to commend sincerely the Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS) and the Group of Experts on Public Administration and Finance for having worked hard to prepare for this session.

In the same light, we wish to recognize with deep thanks and appreciation the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and others whose contributions were invaluable in the preparations for this meeting.

In the era of structural reforms in many of our countries, we deem this meeting to be of crucial

importance and timely. It is of great importance because often the subject of public administration is not accorded its due weight and consideration in national development efforts. The government administrative machinery is at times seen more as a consumer of scarce fiscal resources rather than as a contributor to national income.

There may be merit in some of these assertions, but this is only correct when the public sector is not well trained; when its size cannot be justified on the output and quality of services offered; or when the policies it delivers run counter to the accumulation of national wealth, efficient delivery of social services or administration of justice.

It should be noted that developing and managing an efficient and productive public sector is expensive, irrespective of good intentions. It is for this reason that the support of the United Nations system and the exchange of national experiences is required.

My delegation would like to share with the Assembly our experience and perspectives on this important subject of public administration and development.

In Zambia we have always viewed public administration as an integral component of our national development efforts. Soon after independence, in 1964, the Government undertook administrative reforms aimed at reorienting the colonial administrative structures towards the priorities of our post-colonial State.

We wanted a new administration focused on meeting the challenges of development and equity. The colonial administrative operations were focused more on the maintenance of law and order, as well as the advancement of the economic and social welfare of a small ruling minority community.

In order to accomplish our development goals, priority was placed on manpower development, decentralization and devolution of authority to provincial and district administrations. These changes led to growth in the size of the public service, as new departments were set up to service the new requirements in the social and economic spheres. Alongside the main government administrative machinery was also a parastatal bureaucracy set up to administer the State enterprises.

During this period my Government received significant support from the international community, and the United Nations as well. Assistance was rendered mainly through manpower training. Scholarships were given to our nationals to study abroad; support was also given to the development of national training institutions.

As a result of this cooperation and our own national efforts, we made significant strides in education and in the provision of health and social services in the 1970s and mid-1980s.

When economic difficulties began to be seriously felt in the late 1980s, it became clear that the existence of a large public sector was a hindrance to economic and social progress. This realization led to a series of attempts to reform the public sector.

Little progress was made, because the bleak economic situation and the bloated public service were integral parts of a one-party political system and a socialist ideology, which also needed to be changed.

The coming to power in our country of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), in 1991, was instrumental in relaunching a much more vigorous public service reform programme. The new Government saw the need for a successful public service reform programme as an absolute necessity and an integral part of a nationwide structural adjustment programme.

The public reforms currently under way are not aimed merely at reducing the numbers of public servants. They are also aimed at creating a lean, efficient, highly motivated and dutiful civil service, based on the job requirements and carefully evaluated professional requirements of each Ministry and public institution.

Our public service reform programme itself requires support, especially towards the payment of retirement packages and the relocation of other retrenches who are still able to work in other productive sectors, such as agriculture.

Assistance is required to develop capacity in science and technology. We require assistance to enable us to manage the transition from a State-dominated economy to an economy that is private sector-driven, an economy in which the Government is merely a regulator and provider of essential social services and public infrastructure.

Zambia is also strengthening other institutions of governance. We have, for example, an independent anti-corruption Commission. Accompanying these reforms was the creation of the Zambia Revenue Authority, aimed

at an efficient collection of revenue and at administering a fair tax system, in which the informal sector, too, could make a significant contribution.

My delegation would like to commend the United Nations efforts to lend assistance to developing countries in the areas of public administration and development. The United Nations is relevant and essential for the success of our own efforts.

Delegations will recall that the United Nations has been contributing to the manpower development needs of African countries since their independence days. One of the most significant contributions in this regard, which we would like to cite here, is that of the United Nations Institute for Namibia, which was based in Lusaka, Zambia. We commend the United Nations for that assistance, as well as those countries that assisted in that programme.

We also recognize the role of the United Nations agencies in public administration, in particular, the capacity-building programmes and activities of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with our Governments. Beyond assisting with public service reforms, UNDP is helping my country in the development of the private sector.

Other agencies of the United Nations system involved in public administration assistance to developing countries ought, in our view, to play a much more visible role.

The current activities could be further improved upon. The way to do this is to involve these agencies in the programme approach currently being used by UNDP and other programmes and funds of the United Nations development system.

Assistance to individual countries, to be effective, should be driven by national priorities. Interventions should be of a strategic nature. Upstream activities should not be overemphasized, as some countries still require real capital project support.

It is our hope that this session is merely setting the stage for further dialogue and cooperation on this important subject of public administration and development.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Members are aware that consultations are still being held on draft resolution A/50/L.69. Pending the outcome of the consultations, the General Assembly may meet tomorrow or at a later date. I urge delegates to consult the *Journal of the United Nations* tomorrow morning to check if a meeting of the General Assembly has been scheduled for either tomorrow morning or afternoon, Friday, 19 April.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.